

REMARKS

Claims 117-127, 129-130, 132-134, 137-147, 149-151 and 154-196 are pending. By this Amendment, claims 128, 131, 135, 136, 148, 152 and 153 are canceled, and claims 117, 129, 146, 163, 168 and 173 are amended.

Reconsideration based on the following remarks is respectfully requested.

The Office Action rejects claims 117-191 and 193-196 under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) over Sauer (U.S. Patent No. 5,624,428), and claim 192 under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) over Sauer. These rejections are respectfully traversed.

Regarding independent claims 117, 129, 146, 163, 168, 173, 179 and 189, Sauer does not disclose or even suggest an absorbent article including, inter alia, hook fasteners that are permanently attached to the outer surface of the back waist portion.

Instead, Sauer discloses an absorbent article having an expansion member 46 that is permanently attached to the inner surface of the rear portion 24 of the absorbent article. See FIG. 2 of Sauer.

Regarding independent claims 145 and 178, Sauer does not disclose or even suggest an absorbent article including, inter alia, a third prefolded nonwoven connector and a fourth nonwoven connector, where the first prefolded nonwoven connector is releasably preengaged with the third prefolded nonwoven connector and the second prefolded nonwoven connector is releasably preengaged with the fourth prefolded nonwoven connector.

Instead, Sauer discloses the use of only two connectors (expansion members 46) that connect the rear portion 24 to the front portion 22.

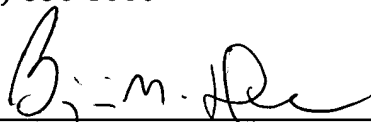
For at least these reasons, it is respectfully submitted that claims 117, 129, 145, 146, 163, 168, 173, 178, 179 and 189 are in condition for allowance. The dependent claims are also in condition for allowance for the reasons discussed as well as for the additional features they recite.

If any fee is deemed necessary to preserve the pendency of the subject application, authorization is hereby given to charge any such fee to Deposit Account No. 01-1785.

Respectfully submitted

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